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**The second Meeting of the EHEA Working Group on Structural Reform**

**(22-23 May 2013, Warsaw)**

**Outline of the breakout session on Transparency and Qualifications Frameworks**

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**Purpose and background**

The main purpose of the breakout session will be to identify the most important issues related to interlinkages between qualifications frameworks and transparency tools, possibly also with a look toward recognition, and to explore ways of improving the transparency role of qualifications frameworks.

**Key issues**

**Taking into account general developments in the areas of transparency and qualifications frameworks the following issues could be addressed during the session:**

***General questions***

* Are qualifications frameworks transparency instruments? If yes, how? NB the purpose is not to identify whether the only or even the most important role of QFs is as transparency instruments but to identify whether and how QFs, among other functions, play this role.
* What features of QFs are most useful as transparency tools?
* What information do qualifications frameworks provide today that is particularly useful for different stakeholders?
* What further information should QFs provide for them to fulfill a role as transparency instruments and what, if anything, needs to be improved in this area?
* In particular, how can qualifications frameworks (QF-EHEA, EQF, national) provide transparent and readily understandable information on learning outcomes?

***Self certification***

Self certification (and in the EQF, referencing) reports complete the development of national qualifications framework and are intended to demonstrate their compatibility with the QF-EHEA and/or the EQF.

* What is required to make a self certification/referencing report a good transparency instrument? What is required to make it credible?
* Should the criteria for self certification and/or referencing be further developed? If yes, how?

***Development of national frameworks after self certification/referencing***

* How should transparent information on the further development of national frameworks after they have been self certified/referenced best be provided?
* How can information on actual practice and on challenges encountered in the implementation of national frameworks best be shared?
* What should be the (formal or non-formal) requirements for revising self certification/referencing reports?

***Other transparency instruments and QFs***

* Would other transparency instruments, such as the Diploma Supplement and the ECTS, need to be reviewed in the light of the development of national frameworks? If yes, why and how?

***Recognition***

The roel of QFs in improving recognition is not the topic of this meeting. To a considerable extent, it is assumed that if quality assurance and qualifications frameworks fulfill their role as transparency instruments, this will help improve recognition. Participants are nevertheless invited to:

* Comment on whether this assumption is true
* Comment on specific aspects of the role of transparency instruments in improving recognition.

Participants can obviously tackle other topics and the breakout session can define them as the issues that need to be addressed by the Working Group.

**Outline of the session**

The breakout session is planned for 3 hours. It should start with a brief introduction by the chair who should outline the main purpose of the session. This should be followed with the presentation/speech by the facilitator. The breakout session aims first of all for giving participants an opportunity for discussion and this should be the main part of the session. Discussion can be divided into a few rounds, first devoted to the general reflection of the participants and further ones focused on certain key issues.

The rapporteur will present the main conclusions from the session on wrap-up session next day.

**APPENDIX 1**

**Criteria & Procedures for Verification of Framework Compatibility**

**(Extract from Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks Report, 2005)**

Criteria for verifying that national frameworks are compatible with the Bologna framework are as follows:

1. The national framework for higher education qualifications and the body or bodies responsible for its development are designated by the national ministry with responsibility for higher education

2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications in the national framework and the cycle qualification descriptors of the European framework

3. The national framework and its qualifications are demonstrably based on learning outcomes and the qualifications are linked to ECTS or ECTS compatible credits

4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national framework are transparent

5. The national quality assurance system for higher education refer to the national framework of qualifications and are consistent with the Berlin Communiqué and any subsequent communiqué agreed by ministers in the Bologna Process

6. The national framework, and any alignment with the European framework, is referenced in all Diploma Supplements

7. The responsibilities of the domestic parties to the national framework are clearly determined and published.

Procedures for verifying that national frameworks are compatible with the Bologna framework are as follows:

1. The competent national body/bodies shall certify the compatibility of the national framework with the European framework.

2. The self-certification process shall include the stated agreement of the quality assurance bodies in the country in question recognised through the Bologna Process

3. The self-certification process shall involve international experts

4. The self-certification and the evidence supporting it shall be published and shall address separately each of the criteria set out

5. The ENIC and NARIC networks shall maintain a public listing of States that have confirmed that they have completed the self-certification process [www.enic-naric.net]

6. The completion of the self-certification process shall be noted on Diploma Supplements issued subsequently by showing the link between the national framework and the European framework.

**APPENDIX 2**

**Qualifications framework for the European Higher Education Area:**

**Criteria and procedures for self-certification (from document Ares(2009)89092)**

**Criteria and procedures**

**for referencing national qualifications levels to the EQF**

1. The responsibilities and/or legal competence of all relevant national bodies involved

in the referencing process, including the National Coordination Point, are clearly

determined and published by the competent public authorities.

2. There is a clear and demonstrable link between the qualifications levels in the national

qualifications framework or system and the level descriptors of the European

Qualifications Framework.

3. The national qualifications framework or system and its qualifications are based on the

principle and objective of learning outcomes and linked to arrangements for validation of

non-formal and informal learning and, where these exist, to credit systems.

4. The procedures for inclusion of qualifications in the national qualifications framework

or for describing the place of qualifications in the national qualification system are

transparent.

5. The national quality assurance system(s) for education and training refer (s) to the

national qualifications framework or system and are consistent with the relevant

European principles and guidelines (as indicated in annex 3 of the Recommendation).

6. The referencing process shall include the stated agreement of the relevant quality

assurance bodies.

7. The referencing process shall involve international experts.

8. The competent national body or bodies shall certify the referencing of the national

qualifications framework or system with the EQF. One comprehensive report, setting out

the referencing and the evidence supporting it shall be published by the competent

national bodies, including the National Coordination Point, and shall address separately

each of the criteria.

9. The official EQF platform shall maintain a public listing of member states that have

confirmed that they have completed the referencing process, including links to completed

referencing reports.

10. Following the referencing process, and in line with the timelines set in the

Recommendation, all new qualification certificates, diplomas and Europass documents

issued by the competent authorities contain a clear reference, by way of national

qualifications systems, to the appropriate European Qualifications Framework level.